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FROM CHRIS HILL

E.O. 12356:DECL
TAGS:
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: MILOSEVIC ON BOSNIA RECOGNITION: NO

REF: STATE 86669

1. SECRET -- ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY. MILOSEVIC REPLIED TO THE CONTACT GROUP PROPOSAL ON RECOGNIZING BOSNIA (REFTEL) WITH A CLEAR NO, AN ASSESSMENT SHARED BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE CONTACT GROUP AFTER AN APRIL 11 FIVE-HOUR MEETING/DINNER WHICH STARTED AT 6:00 P.M. HE EXPLAINED THAT TO RECOGNIZE THE CURRENT STATE OF BOSNIA (AS OPPOSED TO THE FUTURE UNION OF BOSNIA) WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO RECOGNITION OF THE IZETBEGOVIC GOVERNMENT, A MOVE WHICH WOULD BE "COUNTERPRODUCTIVE" AS IT WOULD DRIVE THE BOSNIAN SERBS INTO A WAR FEVER FED BY A SENSE OF ABANDONMENT AND

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Homme, Senior Reviewer

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BETRAYAL.

3. MILOSEVIC INSISTED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO CONVINCING THE BOSNIAN SERBS THAT THEY ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK IS TO OFFER BELGRADE "FULL SANCTIONS RELIEF IMMEDIATELY." MILOSEVIC DID NOT SHARE THE SENSE OF URGENCY ABOUT THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN BOSNIA. ALL SIDES HE BELIEVES -- INCLUDING IZETBEGOVIC -- ARE INTERESTED IN EXTENDING THE CEASE-FIRE. THE ONLY GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR THE RECOGNITION PACKAGE WAS WHEN AFTER FIVE HOURS, MILOSEVIC LOOKED DOWN AT THE TWO PAGE PROPOSAL LYING FACE DOWN ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF HIM, AND SAID: "OKAY, I'LL READ IT." FOLLOWING THE MILOSEVIC MEETING, THE CG MET BRIEFLY AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY TO COMPARE NOTES AND TO CHASTISE RUSSIAN REP ZOTOV FOR HIS REFUSAL TO ENDORSE THE PROPOSAL IN FRONT OF MILOSEVIC AND FOR HIS COMMENTS TO THE PRESS CALLING FOR FULL SANCTIONS RELIEF. END SUMMARY.

4. BRITISH UK REP EHRMAN OPENED THE MARATHON MEETING WITH A 15 MINUTE POINT BY POINT DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTACT GROUP PROPOSAL EXPLAINING ALONG THE WAY THAT THE CONTACT GROUP WAS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED BY THE DETERIORATION OF THE CEASEFIRE AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ALL OUT WAR. MILOSEVIC STARED AT EHRMAN WITH A LOOK OF RAPT FASCINATION AND AT THE CONCLUSION ASKED: "IS THAT IT? THAT'S ALL?"

5. VISIBLY ANNOYED, MILOSEVIC SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD MOST OF THE ELEMENTS BEFORE, THAT THERE WAS NOTHING NEW. HE THEN SAID: "ON THE BASIS OF MY COUNTRY'S EARNEST EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF PEACE I EXPECT THAT YOU, THE CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS, WILL RECOMMEND UNANIMOUSLY THAT THE SANCTIONS AGAINST THE FRY BE LIFTED. WE HAVE, I BELIEVE, SERVED OUR PROBATIONARY PERIOD WITH FULL COOPERATION. NOW IS THE TIME FOR YOU TO RESPOND ACCORDINGLY." HE LOOKED OVER TO HIS SECRETARY, ASKED IF HE HAD GOTTEN IT ALL DOWN AND TOLD HIM TO TYPE IT UP AND DISTRIBUTE IT TO THE CONTACT GROUP. "THAT'S MY REPLY," HE EXPLAINED.

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6. ASKED TO ELABORATE, MILOSEVIC SAID THAT HE HAS DISCUSSED THESE ISSUES "ENDLESSLY" WITH ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONTACT GROUP IN THE PAST. THE BOSNIAN SERBS ARE BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT TO REASON WITH. THIS IS DUE TO THE FAILURE OF THE CONTACT GROUP TO LIFT SANCTIONS AND HELP HIS POSITION AGAINST THE BOSNIAN SERBS WHO STUBBORNLY BELIEVE THAT THE CONTACT GROUP MUST BE ANTI-SERB. HE ADMONISHED HIS INTERLOCUTORS FOR "NOT SEEING THE SITUATION CLEARLY" AND FOR PAYING EXCESSIVE ATTENTION TO "MARGINAL GUYS" SUCH AS IZETBEGOVIC AND KARADZIC.

7. MILOSEVIC GLANCED AT THE PROPOSAL, ALLOWED THAT IT MIGHT BE AN EXPRESSION OF GOOD WILL BUT THAT IT MISSED THE POINT. "YOU KNOW WE HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT WAR" HE DECLARED. "IF YOU WANT TO SUPPORT PEACE IT IS LOGICAL TO SUPPORT THE ONLY RELIABLE FACTOR FIGHTING FOR PEACE, SERBIA." MILOSEVIC ADMITTED THAT HIS EFFORTS WITH THE PALE ASSEMBLY HAD GONE VERY SLOWLY, BUT EXPLAINED THAT THEY WOULD HAVE BORNE FRUIT HAD SERBIA BEEN GRANTED MORE SANCTIONS RELIEF WHEN HE MADE THE IMPORTANT DECISION TO SUPPORT THE CONTACT GROUP PLAN.

8. MILOSEVIC PROFESSED DISBELIEF AT THE FAILURE OF THE CONTACT GROUP TO SEE HIS SIDE OF THINGS. "MAYBE YOU WANT TO KEEP THE WAR ON" HE THEORIZED. MILOSEVIC RACED THROUGH SOME RECENT HISTORY OF THE PEACE PROCESS, STARTING WITH THE VANCE-OWEN PLAN AND INSISTED THAT NOTHING SHORT OF FULL SANCTIONS RELIEF IS APPROPRIATE. "PARTIAL SUSPENSION MEANS NOTHING FOR US." GERMAN REP STEINER TRIED TO EXPLAIN THE ORIGINS OF PLAN "A" AND PLAN "B" BUT MILOSEVIC WAVED HIM OFF DECLARING: "WE HAVE PASSED THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD: FIRST TWO MONTHS THEN 100 DAYS THEN ANOTHER 100 DAYS." SUSPENSION, HE EXPLAINED, IS A HUMILIATION, AND HE CITED THE CONTACT GROUP'S PROMISE TO GET NATURAL GAS INTO SERBIA, A DELIVERY WHICH NEVER CAME AND WHICH IN

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MILOSEVIC'S VIEW SHOWED " AN ABSENCE OF STYLE." HE ALSO MENTIONED THE HELICOPTER FLIGHTS AS A FIGMENT OF SOMEONE'S IMAGINATION. "THEY ARE PROBABLY MUSLIM OR TURKISH. BESIDES, THEY WERE HEARD GOING FROM BOSNIA INTO SERBIA. WHAT WOULD THEY BE CARRYING? WOOD AND POTATOES?"

9. MILOSEVIC INSISTED THAT HIS WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE THE "BOSNIAN UNION" WAS A FAIR OFFER, BASED ENTIRELY ON THE CONTACT GROUP PLAN. US REP TOLD HIM WE WERE NOT INTERESTED IN A PROMISSORY NOTE. TO BE MEANINGFUL, RECOGNITION MUST BE OF THE EXISTING STATE OF BOSNIA. MILOSEVIC INSISTED THAT HIS WILLINGNESS TO RECOGNIZE THE FUTURE UNION WAS FIRM, AND SHOULD BE SEEN AS "RECOGNITION NOW" OF A FUTURE UNION. MILOSEVIC INSISTED THAT RECOGNITION OF THE UNION WOULD "BYPASS" KARADZIC AND PUT ALL THE PRESSURE NEEDED ON HIM, WITHOUT BEING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. MILOSEVIC INSISTED THAT BOSNIA TODAY IS NOT A STATE, "IT'S A BATTLEFIELD." NONE OF THE CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS SHOWED ANY INTEREST IN PURSUING OTHER RECOGNITION CONCEPTS. THE FRENCH REP ALONE TRIED TO BE HELPFUL BY ADDING: "YOU CAN SAY YOU ONLY RECOGNIZE BOSNIA, NOT THE IZETBEGOVIC GOVERNMENT."

10. NOR DID ANY OF THE CONTACT GROUP ENGAGE MILOSEVIC WHEN HE TURNED TO THE SUBJECT OF THE FRY AS A SUCCESSOR STATE. NONE OF THE OTHER REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA DISPUTE THE FRY'S STATUS AS SUCH, HE ARGUED. STEINER AND HILL TOLD HIM THEY WERE NOT INTERESTED IN PURSUING THIS ISSUE AT THIS TIME AND MILOSEVIC DROPPED IT.

11. MILOSEVIC SAID THAT THE WEST WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DROP SANCTIONS. "YOU CANNOT KEEP SOMETHING IN PLACE WHICH IS HARMING 150 MILLION PEOPLE." IF RUSSIA WANTS TO LIFT THE SANCTIONS THAT WILL BE ENOUGH FOR SERBIA, HE ARGUED.

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12. MILOSEVIC IS CONVINCED THAT CARTER WILL COME AND THAT KARADZIC WILL WELCOME HIM, AS THE FORMER PRESIDENT IS HIS TICKET TO RESPECTABILITY. "KARADZIC WILL LIE AGAIN TO CARTER. HE WILL NOT FOLLOW THROUGH ON ANY COMMITMENTS." HE WAS DERISIVE ABOUT THE BOSNIAN SERB LEADERSHIP, CALLING THEM ALL "LIARS". "KOLJEVIC IS DRUNK EVERY DAY BY 10:00 AM." AS FOR KARADZIC, "HE'S NOT A PSYCHIATRIST, HE'S A PATIENT!" MILOSEVIC SEES SOME POSSIBILITY THAT MLADIC WILL BREAK WITH HIS CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. THE BOSNIAN SERB LEADERS, MILOSEVIC BELIEVES, ARE OBSESSED BY THE IDEA THAT IF THEY ACCEPT THE CONTACT GROUP PLAN WITH ITS MAP, THEY MAY BE STUCK WITH IT IF THEY ARE UNABLE TO WORK OUT THE SWAPS THAT THEY FEEL HAVE TO BE MADE, SUCH AS A 16 KM BRZKO CORRIDOR. MILOSEVIC BELIEVES THE CONTACT GROUP MAY WANT TO HAVE CONTACTS WITH THE BANJA LUKA LEADERSHIP WHICH HE CLAIMS IS MUCH MORE ENLIGHTENED THAN THE CROWD FROM PALE. "BUT FIRST I'LL HAVE TO CHECK THIS OUT."

13. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE EVENING, MILOSEVIC LOOKED DOWN AT THE CONTACT GROUP PROPOSAL AND SAID HE WOULD READ IT AND GET BACK TO THE GROUP WITH HIS COMMENTS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT HIS DIFFERENCES ARE FUNDAMENTAL: HE WILL NOT RECOGNIZE THE EXISTING STATE OF BOSNIA, AND HE WILL ACCEPT NO LESS THAN FULL SANCTIONS RELIEF.

14. COMMENT: THE CONTACT GROUP MET BRIEFLY AT MIDNIGHT AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY TO COMPARE NOTES. EVERYONE AGREED THAT DESPITE HIS WILLINGNESS TO STUDY THE PROPOSAL, MILOSEVIC HAD GIVEN THE GROUP A FIRM NO. THE MEMBERS AGREED THAT HE ACTED AS THOUGH HE WAS UNDER LITTLE PRESSURE, AND DID NOT EVEN SHARE THE VIEW THAT THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN BOSNIA WAS GETTING OUT OF HAND.

15. AT THE END OF THE POST-MORTEM, THE GROUP PUT

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ZOTOV IN THE HOT SEAT FOR HIS COMMENTS TO THE BELGRADE PRESS EARLIER IN THE DAY TO THE EFFECT THAT MOSCOW SUPPORTS FULL SANCTIONS RELIEF. STEINER, LOOKING INTENTLY OVER HIS WIRE RIMMED GLASSES, HELD UP THE CG PROPOSAL IN HIS HAND AND ASKED ZOTOV WHETHER HIS GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED IT. ZOTOV, VISIBLY PERSPIRING AND TUGGING AT HIS COLLAR, EXPLAINED THAT HE CONSIDERED IT NOT AS A CONTACT GROUP PROPOSAL, BUT RATHER AS SOMETHING "WORKED OUT IN THE CONTACT GROUP." ZOTOV PLEADED: "IT WAS THE BEST I COULD DO." PERINA

END OF MESSAGE

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